THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) The new initiatives proposed for improving the postal system during the 10th Five Year Plan are as follows:

(i) Electronic Fund Transfer

(ii) Introduction of Smart Cards

(iii) Currency exchange facility through Postal Counters

(iv) Cash management services like payment of warrants and dividends

(v) Commercial exploitation of estates with a view to earning mere revenues

(vi) Introduction of the concept of distance learning for training of postmen and imparting training on software applications at the workplace

(vii) Setting up of National Data Centre.

(b) and (c) The following core activities which were undertaken during the 9th Five Year Plan are proposed to be carried forward:

(i) Computerisation of basic postal functions and connectivity

(ii) Business Development activities for diversification of products

(iii) Human Resources Development through training

(iv) Improving ergonomics of operative offices

(v) Mechanisation of mail movement

(vi) Extending scope for agency functions through post offices.

IT education in the country

4552. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that foreign institutions are providing information technology education in the country;

(b) if so, the names of the institutions country-wise, providing such arrangements in the country alongwith the locations thereof; and

(c) the number of persons likely to be benefited annually by these arrangements and the expected annual expenditures to be incurred thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Government does not maintain information about foreign institutions providing IT education in the country.

TPDS beneficiaries in Maharashtra

4553. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been requested by Government of Maharashtra to increase the number of Targeted Public Distribution System beneficiaries in the State from the present 65.34 lakhs on the basis of population as per 2001 census; and

(b) if so, Government's response thereto and the steps taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government of Maharashtra has requested for increasing the number of BPL beneficiaries under TPDS from 65.34 lakhs to 69.34 lakhs on the basis of the increased population as per the 2001 census.

The allocation of foodgrains at subsidized Central Issue Prices (CIPs) for BPL families is made as per the poverty estimates of the Planning Commission for the year 1993-94 based on the methodology of the "Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor" constituted by the Planning Commission. At the time of introduction of TPDS the BPL families were estimated on the population projections of 1995. From December, 2000 onwards, the BPL families are being estimated as per the latest available population